

MCCOMAS INSTITUTE  
1913 Singer Road  
Joppa vicinity  
Harford County  
Maryland

HABS MD-1235  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## McCOMAS INSTITUTE

HABS No. MD-1235

- Location:** 1913 Singer Road, Joppa vic., Harford County, Maryland.  
The coordinates for McComas Institute are 76.212948 W and 39.280271 N, and they were obtained through Google Earth in November 2011 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.
- Significance:** The McComas Institute is a rare surviving example of a Freedman's Bureau school built to serve the needs of the newly freed local black population in the aftermath of the Civil War. The federal Freedmen's Bureau worked with local citizens to acquire property and erect the school in 1867.
- Description:** This unassuming one-story wood frame building sits on a stone foundation. It is rectangular in plan with the entrance on the short, gable end facing Singer Road. The double doors have a horizontal 5-light transom above. The school is sided with wood clapboards and a small gabled bell cupola with louvered sides sits at the gable peak. Its name and date are painted around a semicircular louvered opening in the gable. A modest brick stove chimney is located on the left slope of the roof towards the rear of structure. Window openings with six over six double hung wood sash flank the door on the gable end and also create five bays on the long side of the structure.
- History:** The McComas Institute was built in 1867 under the sponsorship of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to serve the needs of formerly enslaved black Harford County residents in the aftermath of the Civil War. The Freedmen's Bureau was created as part of the federal War Department in 1864. Of the two Freedmen's Bureau schools in Harford County, the McComas Institute is the only survivor. It was named for local abolitionist and tobacco merchant George McComas, who lived at nearby Linwood.
- Sources:** Christopher Weeks, *An Architectural History of Harford County, Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 243.
- Historian:** Lisa Pfueller Davidson, HABS Historian, 2006.
- Project Information:** This short form history was prepared to supplement photographic documentation of Harford County, Maryland. During 2005 HABS staff photographer James Rosenthal photographed a series of sites in Harford County in preparation for the *Buildings of Maryland* publication. Maryland Historical Trust sponsored the photography project and is producing *Buildings of Maryland* as part of the Society of Architectural Historians' *Buildings of the United States* series.